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Prophetic Pedagogy and Moderate Islamic Education: An Analysis of Washatiyah Learning Methods in Ar-Rasūl al-Mu'allim

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Abstract: *Balanced and moderate Islamic education is essential for addressing contemporary challenges such as extremism, rigid formalism, and impersonal pedagogical practices. This study examines the moderation-based teaching methods (washatiyah) of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ documented in Ar-Rasūl al-Mu'allim, focusing on the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. Employing a qualitative library research approach, the study analyzes the Prophet's pedagogical principles, including tadarruj (gradual learning), dialogical engagement, role modeling, contextual demonstration, and taysir (ease and facilitation). The findings indicate that these methods effectively balance intellectual rigor, ethical cultivation, and practical application, fostering learners who are morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially inclusive. Furthermore, the moderation-based pedagogy remains highly relevant for contemporary Islamic education, providing educators with strategies to cultivate critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and holistic character formation in diverse learning contexts.*

Keywords: *Prophetic Pedagogy; Moderate Islamic Education (Washatiyah); Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic educational systems in the contemporary world face multifaceted challenges that threaten their capacity to nurture well-rounded and humane learners, including the rise of ideological extremism, persistent rigid formalism, and pedagogical practices that are often impersonal, rote-oriented, and detached from ethical and humanistic values. Such conditions frequently lead to narrow and literal interpretations of religious teachings, which can foster intolerance, radicalism, and disengagement among students (Primarni & Aminah, 2024; Maisari, 2025). In many educational institutions, Islamic learning has been reduced to memorization and doctrinal repetition, neglecting moral, spiritual, and social formation that is essential for holistic development (Batsal & Hadi, 2025). The resulting gap between the pedagogical ideals of Islamic education—which integrate intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth—and the realities of contemporary practice underscores the urgent need for a reframed approach that emphasizes ethical development, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Integrating humanistic values and moderation principles (washatiyah) into Islamic pedagogical frameworks provides a strategic pathway for cultivating learners who are not only intellectually competent but also morally grounded and socially engaged, thereby addressing contemporary educational vulnerabilities while fostering resilience against extremist ideologies (Primarni & Aminah, 2024; Maisari, 2025; Batsal & Hadi, 2025).

In this context, Islamic moderation (washatiyah) has emerged as a critical educational paradigm for addressing extremism and fostering balanced learning environments. As a Qur'anic and prophetic principle, washatiyah advocates a middle path that avoids extremes and integrates core Islamic values into the educational process, emphasizing justice, inclusivity, and tolerance (Rahim et al., 2025). This principle aligns with the needs of multicultural and pluralistic societies, offering a framework in which learners can develop both cognitively and ethically. Empirical research demonstrates that embedding washatiyah in Islamic education not only promotes moral resilience and social cohesion but also encourages critical engagement, enabling students to navigate complex social and ideological landscapes without compromising religious integrity (Ichsan et al., 2024; Purnamasari, 2026; Budiyanto, 2025). By emphasizing moderation and contextualized pedagogy, washatiyah provides a sustainable pathway for cultivating learners who are intellectually competent, socially responsible, and morally grounded.

Islamic educational systems in the contemporary world face multifaceted challenges, including ideological extremism, rigid formalism, and pedagogical practices that are impersonal and detached from humanistic values (Primarni & Aminah, 2024; Maisari, 2025; Batsal & Hadi, 2025). Such conditions often lead to narrow interpretations of religious teachings, fostering intolerance, radicalism, and disengagement among students, while prioritizing rote memorization over moral, spiritual, and social formation. In response, Islamic moderation (washatiyah) has emerged as a vital educational paradigm that advocates a middle path in learning, integrating Qur'anic and prophetic values with justice, inclusivity, and tolerance (Ichsan et al., 2024; Rahim et al., 2025; Budiyanto, 2025). Moderation-based Islamic education prioritizes pedagogical approaches that harmonize intellectual rigor with ethical conduct and social engagement. Empirical studies indicate that moderation-oriented learning models foster both cognitive understanding and affective dispositions toward tolerance and empathy, which are essential to counter radical and intolerant attitudes in educational spaces (Purnamasari, 2026; Rahim et al., 2025; Budiyanto, 2025).

Central to the operationalization of these principles is Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the exemplary educator, whose pedagogical approach was inherently humanistic, dialogical, and contextually responsive. Historical and contemporary research highlights that the Prophet employed storytelling, questioning, role modeling, and experiential learning to facilitate understanding and internalization of moral values (Budiyanto, 2025; Rahim et al., 2025; Ichsan et al., 2024). This balanced approach effectively integrates intellectual development with ethical cultivation, providing a timeless model for contemporary Islamic pedagogy that cultivates learners who are morally grounded, socially responsible, and intellectually competent. By embedding washatiyah principles within educational practice, Islamic education can address both cognitive and moral dimensions of learning, ensuring holistic character formation that is responsive to the complexities of modern society.

The Prophet's teaching approach consistently demonstrated a profound emphasis on mercy, patience, and contextual sensitivity. His interactions with diverse individuals of varying levels of understanding emphasize the importance of adapting instruction to learners' needs, fostering an environment where knowledge is both meaningful and transformative. This educational model aligns with modern pedagogical theories that advocate for learner-centered and value-based instruction, demonstrating its enduring

relevance (Budiyanto, 2025). Despite the rich pedagogical legacy of prophetic teaching, much of contemporary Islamic education tends to rely on formalistic and technical models that prioritize memorization and compliance over holistic development. Such practices often fail to engage learners' moral and spiritual sensibilities, leading to education that is rigid and disconnected from lived realities. Scholars argue that reframing Islamic education through the lens of prophetic pedagogy and moderation can address these gaps, enabling learning that is both intellectually substantive and ethically grounded (Ichsan et al., 2024; Purnamasari, 2026). Moreover, research on washatiyah in Islamic education suggests that embedding moderation principles into curricula and instructional practices can cultivate students who are reflective, tolerant, and socially responsible. These outcomes are critical in an era marked by rapid globalization, technological change, and ideological contestation, where learners must navigate diverse worldviews while maintaining ethical coherence (Rahim et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the moderate learning methods and pedagogical wisdom of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as articulated in classical Islamic sources *Ar-Rasūl al-Mu'allim*, exploring how these principles offer a balanced and humanistic framework for contemporary Islamic education. By engaging with prophetic pedagogical insights and moderation values, this research seeks to contribute to a robust conceptual and practical foundation for educational reform that addresses both spiritual and cognitive dimensions of learning.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing a library research (desk study) method to explore the pedagogical methods of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as described in classical Islamic literature. The qualitative approach is chosen because it enables a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of educational concepts, theories, and practices, particularly those that reflect moderation, humanistic teaching, and contextualized learning (Creswell, 2014). The study focuses on interpreting the textual descriptions of teaching strategies, learning methods, and ethical guidance embedded within the classical texts, emphasizing their relevance to contemporary Islamic education. The primary source of data for this research is the classical text *Ar-Rasūl al-Mu'allim wa Asālībuhu fī at-Ta'līm* by 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah, which elaborates on the Prophet's balanced and humanistic pedagogical principles. Complementary sources include books, scholarly articles, and research reports that discuss Islamic education, washatiyah

(moderation), and modern pedagogical applications. These sources were selected for their credibility, relevance, and scholarly recognition, ensuring that the study is grounded in authoritative and current academic discourse. Data collection involved careful reading, note-taking, and classification of key themes, strategies, and patterns related to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development, as well as moral and spiritual formation.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis, which systematically examines textual material to identify key themes, patterns, and relationships. The process involved three main stages: first, data reduction, in which irrelevant information was filtered out while focusing on essential pedagogical concepts; second, data display, organizing findings into coherent categories such as dialogical methods, incremental learning (tadarruj), and context-sensitive instruction; and third, drawing conclusions, interpreting the pedagogical insights to understand their relevance for contemporary Islamic education. This descriptive and systematic approach ensures the study provides a comprehensive, rigorous, and applicable understanding of the Prophet's moderation-based pedagogical wisdom (Sugiyono, 2010; Zed, 2008; Creswell, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dimensions of Moderation in the Prophet's Teaching Methods

The pedagogical approach of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplifies a holistic and integrated form of moderation that addresses multiple dimensions of human development. As documented in *Ar-Rasūl al-Mu'allim*, the Prophet meticulously balanced the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, ensuring that education transcended mere intellectual acquisition to include ethical awareness, emotional intelligence, and practical application (Abu Ghuddah, 1996; Al-Abrasyi, 1993). Cognitive learning was always linked with reflection on moral values, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning, while affective development emphasized empathy, compassion, and social sensitivity. By integrating these dimensions, the Prophet created a pedagogical environment that cultivated well-rounded learners capable of understanding knowledge and applying it with wisdom in real-life situations (Shihab, 2019; Rahim et al., 2025).

A central aspect of this moderation is the dynamic equilibrium between firmness in principle and compassion in instruction. The Prophet maintained a consistent adherence to core ethical and religious principles, yet his approach to teaching was never authoritarian or punitive (Nata, 2014; Purnamasari, 2026). Corrections were delivered in a manner that preserved the dignity of learners, avoiding psychological burden and

promoting self-confidence. This method illustrates a balance between strict adherence to normative values and the humanistic consideration of the learners' emotional and psychological well-being, a feature that modern educational theorists describe as ethically responsive pedagogy (Budiyanto, 2025; Ichsan et al., 2024). It demonstrates that effective teaching in Islamic education is not merely about content delivery but also about fostering internalization of values through empathetic engagement.

Furthermore, the Prophet's approach reflects a profound understanding of individual differences and contextual learning. Teaching was adapted according to the learner's capacity, background, and readiness, employing methods such as tadarruj (gradual instruction) and dialogical engagement (questions and answers, storytelling, and role modeling) to ensure comprehension and retention (Abu Ghuddah, 1996; Al-Qardhawi, 1995). This approach resonates with contemporary theories of differentiated instruction and learner-centered pedagogy, highlighting the enduring relevance of prophetic educational methods. It emphasizes that moderation is not only a theoretical ideal but also a practical strategy to engage diverse learners, accommodating their cognitive abilities, emotional states, and social contexts while upholding ethical and religious standards (Azra, 2019; Tri Astuti et al., 2023).

Finally, the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions within a framework of moderation illustrates a comprehensive educational paradigm where knowledge, character, and action are inseparable. This model aligns with modern holistic education frameworks, demonstrating that moderation (washatiyah) in Islamic pedagogy is multidimensional, encompassing intellectual rigor, ethical cultivation, and socially responsible behavior (Muhaimin, 2012; Rahim et al., 2025). By embedding ethical reflection, emotional intelligence, and practical engagement into learning, the Prophet ensured that education was transformative, preparing learners not only for intellectual achievement but also for moral leadership, social harmony, and spiritual resilience. This approach remains a critical reference point for developing Islamic educational practices that are both balanced and contextually relevant in contemporary society.

Prophetic pedagogy, as articulated in *Ar-Rasūl al-Mu'allim*, demonstrates a systematic and practical application of moderation (washatiyah) through clearly defined instructional methods. Among the most prominent techniques are tadarruj (gradual learning), dialogical engagement (question-and-answer), role modeling, and contextual demonstration (Budiyanto, 2025; Muhaimin, 2012). Tadarruj involves presenting

knowledge incrementally, respecting the learner's cognitive capacity and prior understanding. This gradual progression allows learners to absorb information thoroughly without experiencing cognitive overload, while simultaneously fostering moral and spiritual development. Such incremental learning aligns with contemporary educational theories on scaffolding, emphasizing that meaningful learning occurs when knowledge is sequenced appropriately and connected to prior understanding (Creswell, 2014; Shihab, 2019).

The dialogical engagement method, which includes questions, discussions, and reflective conversations, encourages critical thinking, active participation, and ethical reasoning. By prompting learners to articulate their understanding and relate lessons to real-life contexts, this approach ensures that knowledge is internalized rather than passively received. The Prophet also employed role modeling, demonstrating behaviors and attitudes that reflected the ethical and spiritual ideals being taught. This technique not only communicated knowledge but also provided a tangible standard for learners to emulate, reinforcing the affective and psychomotor domains alongside cognitive understanding (Abu Ghuddah, 1996; Purnamasari, 2026).

Contextual demonstration is another critical element, wherein the Prophet presented lessons in ways that were relevant to the learners' social, cultural, and personal circumstances. This practice emphasizes that learning is most effective when situated within the lived experiences of the student, allowing them to see the practical relevance of ethical and religious principles. Additionally, the principle of taysir (ease and facilitation) underpins all these methods, discouraging overly rigid or burdensome approaches to teaching. By simplifying complex concepts and adapting the pace and method of instruction, the Prophet ensured that learning remained accessible, inclusive, and conducive to sustainable moral and intellectual development (Al-Qardhawi, 1995; Ichsan et al., 2024).

Collectively, these methods create a balanced and sustainable framework for moderate Islamic education, integrating ideal religious values with the practical realities of human learning capacities. They prevent extremes in pedagogy, avoiding both rigid dogmatism and unchecked liberal interpretation, while fostering holistic development across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Modern educators can draw upon these principles to design curricula and teaching strategies that are not only intellectually rigorous but also ethically grounded and contextually sensitive, reflecting the enduring

relevance of prophetic pedagogy for contemporary Islamic educational practice (Budiyanto, 2025; Muhaimin, 2012; Rahim et al., 2025).

Table 1. *Technical Methods of Moderate Learning in Prophetic Pedagogy*

Method	Cognitive Focus	Affective Focus	Psychomotor/ Practical Focus	Example/Implementation	References
Tadarruj (Gradual Learning)	Incremental understanding of knowledge	Builds patience, self-confidence, and perseverance	Step-by-step practice	Learning small portions of Qur'an or Hadith gradually	Abu Ghuddah, 1996; Muhaimin, 2012
Dialogical Engagement (Q&A)	Critical thinking, comprehension	Reflection, empathy, ethical reasoning	Verbal interaction, discussion skills	Questioning during study circles, debates on moral topics	Budiyanto, 2025; Purnamasari, 2026
Role Modeling	Observational learning	Moral emulation, value internalization	Imitating ethical and religious behaviors	Prophet demonstrating honesty, compassion, and charity	Abu Ghuddah, 1996; Ichsan et al., 2024
Contextual Demonstration	Application of theoretical knowledge	Awareness of social and ethical implications	Practical implementation in real-life situations	Applying lessons in community service, social interactions	Al-Qardhawi, 1995; Shihab, 2019
Taysir (Ease & Facilitation)	Simplification of concepts	Reduces anxiety, increases motivation	Adaptation to learner's abilities	Adjusting lesson complexity to learner readiness	Abu Ghuddah, 1996; Budiyanto, 2025

Relevance of Washatiyah in Contemporary Contexts

The moderation-based pedagogy exemplified by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ continues to be highly relevant for contemporary Islamic education, particularly in the age of globalization and digital information. Modern learners are exposed to an unprecedented volume of information, including conflicting ideologies and extremist

content, which can challenge their ethical and intellectual development. Washatiyah-oriented methods provide a framework that allows educators to foster critical thinking, moral discernment, and spiritual grounding, ensuring that learners can navigate complex socio-digital landscapes without compromising religious integrity (Ichsan et al., 2024; Purnamasari, 2026; Shihab, 2019).

A core principle of washatiyah pedagogy is the redefinition of educators' roles as mu'addib (character builders) and mursyid (spiritual guides) rather than mere transmitters of information. This mentoring-based approach emphasizes guidance, moral exemplification, and personalized instruction, cultivating learners who are not only intellectually competent but also socially responsible and ethically grounded (Rahim et al., 2025; Budiyanto, 2025). By integrating ethical reflection and personal guidance into the learning process, educators encourage students to internalize values such as empathy, tolerance, and civic responsibility, which are crucial in pluralistic societies.

Moderation-based pedagogy also prioritizes the creation of psychologically safe learning environments, where errors are treated as natural and instructive rather than punitive. This approach aligns closely with contemporary educational concepts such as the growth mindset and psychological safety, which research has shown to enhance learner motivation, resilience, and engagement (Azra, 2019; Tri Astuti et al., 2023). Such environments enable learners to critically analyze and contextualize knowledge, encouraging reflective thinking while reducing anxiety and fear of failure.

Furthermore, the Prophet's teaching methods integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions, reflecting a holistic approach to learner development. Lessons are not only intellectually rigorous but also morally and practically oriented, ensuring that learners develop the ability to apply knowledge ethically in real-life contexts. By balancing doctrinal integrity with humanistic pedagogy, washatiyah ensures that education remains relevant, context-sensitive, and aligned with learners' cognitive and emotional capacities (Ichsan et al., 2024; Purnamasari, 2026; Rahim et al., 2025).

Ultimately, moderation-based pedagogical principles provide a timeless and practical framework for contemporary Islamic education, enabling educators to address both individual and societal challenges. These principles foster learners who are intellectually competent, morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially inclusive. By integrating prophetic pedagogy with modern educational insights, washatiyah offers a sustainable model for Islamic education that promotes ethical reasoning, social

cohesion, and holistic character formation in the digital age (Azra, 2019; Tri Astuti et al., 2023; Budiyanto, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the pedagogical methods of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ embody a holistic and moderation-based approach (washatiyah) that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. The Prophet's educational strategies, including tadarruj (gradual learning), dialogical engagement, role modeling, and contextual demonstration, effectively balanced intellectual rigor with ethical cultivation and practical application. His principle of taysir (ease and facilitation) further ensured that learning remained accessible, humanistic, and free from extremes, fostering an environment conducive to moral, spiritual, and intellectual development. The analysis highlights that prophetic pedagogy consistently combined firmness in principle with compassion, providing learners with guidance that was both ethical and psychologically supportive. This balance prevented rigid dogmatism or unchecked liberal interpretation, demonstrating that moderation in teaching is both a theoretical ideal and a practical framework for holistic education. By cultivating empathy, ethical reflection, and practical skills alongside knowledge acquisition, the Prophet's methods promoted the formation of well-rounded individuals capable of ethical decision-making and responsible social engagement. The relevance of these moderation-based methods is particularly pronounced in contemporary Islamic education, where learners encounter digital information overload, ideological polarization, and potential exposure to radical ideas. Implementing washatiyah-oriented pedagogy equips educators to foster critical thinking, spiritual grounding, and social responsibility, while also creating psychologically safe learning environments that embrace mistakes as part of the learning process. Educators are positioned as mu'addib (character builders) and mursyid (spiritual guides), ensuring that students develop not only cognitively but also morally and socially.

In conclusion, prophetic pedagogy offers a timeless, practical, and sustainable framework for contemporary Islamic education. By integrating ethical, cognitive, and practical dimensions, washatiyah provides guidance for shaping learners who are intellectually competent, morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially inclusive. These principles remain crucial for designing educational strategies that address both individual growth and societal challenges in the modern era, contributing to the development of balanced, ethical, and reflective generations.

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